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# The Unveiled Word

## John 1:14-18

### Introduction

It is a word which describes the indiscernible. It is the measurement of the immeasurable. It gives us hope in a hopeless world. It communicates peace in a noisy life. With it we are satisfied. Without it we continue questing in complaint. All other beauty is but the echo of this voice. All other happiness is but a shadow of this substance. Every other light is but an imitation of this sun. It always has existed. It always will exist. It cannot wear out. It never has bad days. It is not moody. Its intensity never fluctuates. The human heart craves it. Every subsequent discovery of it stimulates the soul. It extends forgiveness. It mends the irreparable injury. It heals the incurable disease. It loves the unlovely. The word to which we now turn our attention for the next few minutes is GRACE.

Open your Bibles to John 1:14-18. In this passage we press up against one of the most startling statements in the Bible. Through this text we are introduced to a mystery which stretches the mind and can warm the heart. It is good for all of us to follow the passage as I preach tonight. So please look at the words of the text as I work through this paragraph. (read the text)

Christmas is a time filled with potential. We get together with family and friends in hope of renewing our relationships. We send cards to distant loved ones in hope of staying connected. We bake goodies to please many acquaintances. We exchange presents in hope that we will communicate and receive love. For many of us we desire to keep Jesus in focus amid the hectic celebration. In a few days the gifts will be unwrapped, the goodies will hibernate in our tummies, trees taken down, the family and friends bidding their good-byes and all the decorative Christmas cards that brought joy to our hearts filed in a show box and placed in the closet.

When the festivities are over what remains? Will we be full after the foods and families and friends are gone? When January 2<sup>nd</sup> comes and all the celebrations of parades, people, football and food draw to a close will we be satisfied? We can and will if we understand and receive the word for tonight. How can the passage we just heard read assist us in understanding and receiving the Word?

The apostle John in vv.1-3 began describing the Word. It is as though he was methodically unveiling the identity and beauty of the Word. Picking up John's thought in v.14 we see him resuming to unveil for us the Word in order for us to understand how to experience fullness;

not only after Christmas time and throughout this life but into eternity.

## **“The Word became flesh”**

**(V.14a)**

John slowly draws veil away from the Word to disclose where we can experience fullness. This is seen in the utterly startling sentence “The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us”. A gripping and gasping statement this proves to be. For twenty centuries brilliant and simple minds alike have strained to glance into the canyon of this mystery with minimal success of defining it. This statement tells us that the Almighty maker and ruler of the universe became a 7lb. new born to a teenaged virgin named Mary and grew up to become a sinless man in order that He, God in flesh, might take upon Himself the sins of the world and die a horrific death so that believers in Christ would not experience the wrath of God but the love of God instead. This incarnation of God, as John Piper put it, was the “eternal purpose of God to manifest the wisdom of God by extending the love of God without compromising the justice of God”.

If you are not convinced that the statement “the word became flesh” means God became a man listen to the first part of the gospel of John. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the word was God”. Now in v.14 we read, “and the word became flesh”. No other interpretation of this statement has integrity unless it concludes the astonishing truth that God became man in order that man might come to God.

## **“the glory...full of grace and truth”**

**V.14b**

The next draw on the veil to reveal where we can experience fullness forever is seen in the phrase “the glory...full of grace and truth”.

This phrase is difficult to come to terms with. We get a clue of what John was communicating when we go back into a passage from which he took this imagery. This passage is found in Ex.33 & 34. Here we read the account of the tent of Meeting in which God would come down in the form of a pillar of cloud and meet with Moses and Joshua. In this account God had been telling Moses to lead the people. Moses requested God to show him His glory. Then we read what God said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you...”. When God who cannot be seen face to face lest the person die, passed in front of Moses He showed him a trace of His glory and said, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished...”

Now back to Jn.1. The apostle, from this parallel passage, points at Yahweh of Exodus to describe the Word. As we noticed, the Lord said to Moses that his goodness was abounding in love and faithfulness. John talks about the Word whose glory is full of grace and truth. The terms are similar. It is at this point in the unveiling of the Word that we began to understand where we can find fullness forever for our emptiness. The rich term GRACE means unmerited, life-changing love. It means that God is teeming with mercy and delights to enrich undeserving people with His goodness. It means that He will take pleasure in doing us good all the days of our lives; forgiving our sins, chasing away the guilt of rebellion, bringing peace and wholeness to the broken. Grace means that God will employ his all powerful might to secure lasting happiness for the repentant, to give the broken and contrite an eternal home filled with bliss and rapturous delights. All that God is He is for those who by faith receive His grace.

The second term in this description is the word “truth”. Here the apostle continues to describe the fullness of the Word’s glory by talking about his faithfulness. The Christmas story would not be good news if the Word was just loving kindness and not faithfulness. The Word would be like us who may have good intentions but fail to follow through. We make promises that are based on a desire to do good for someone but due to weaknesses and inconsistencies we at times do not follow through with the good intentions. Loving just in words and not in deeds is not grace and truth. However, the Word from whom we can get our fill is not like that. He is unveiled as having faithfulness, possessing fidelity and integrity. In other words what the Word sets out to do (i.e. secure goodness for the repentant) He does it 100% of the time. Now that, beloved, is good news!

**“From the fullness of his grace we have all received...”**

**(v.16)**

The next tug on the veil to reveal where we can experience fullness forever is in the phrase “From the fullness of his grace we have all received grace upon grace”. The apostle has talked about seeing the fullness of the glory but now he talks about a critical issue. John desires to attract his readers to the Word by unveiling the Word methodically. More of the veil is taken off the Word when John talks about how he and his friends became beneficiaries of the fullness. Notice what he says, “from the fullness of his grace we have all received grace upon grace”. This abundant supply of unmerited and unwavering and life-changing love does not fill the empty soul mechanically. Reception is in order. If tomorrow you were given a present and you did not receive it with thankfulness but said, “thanks anyway” would you be enriched by that gift? So it is with God’s gift

as seen in the Word. His self-disclosure of all he is to the individual will not bring one blessing after another unless there is a welcoming of his goodness, unless one takes it in by faith and delights himself in the grace.

## “Jesus Christ”

(Vv.17,18)

The apostle John from the first verse of this chapter has been talking about and describing the Word. He has been slowly unveiling the Word to attract us to look more closely at its features; its breathtaking beauty. Yet there is one thing missing. There is no identity to the Word. What is it? Better question is who is it? So John, sensing the timing is right, pulls on the veil one last time to fully disclose the Word. All the fullness of deity in bodily form, the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all the unimaginable riches of the universe are fleshed out in one person. V.17 gives us the identity of God in flesh; JESUS.

All the fullness of God’s goodness seen in his love and faithfulness can be received only in Jesus. The hidden cry of our hearts cannot be met outside of Jesus. The gnawing ache of disappointments cannot be relieved apart from Jesus. The deep and persistent pain in our souls due to violations cannot be healed without Jesus. The guilt of our sin cannot be removed without Jesus. The hardness of bitterness cannot be softened outside of Jesus. All the fullness of God’s goodness is not found in Buddha nor is it discovered in Muhammad. It cannot be experienced in Confucius. It will not be encountered in ourselves through work, clothes, new homes, hunting equipment, human relationships, power or prestige. The apostle has fully unveiled the source of fullness. He is the Word of God; Jesus Christ himself. The unwrapping and receiving of this gift is truly Christmas.

## Conclusion

A familiar Mother Goose rhyme sums up the challenge at Christmas time.

Pussy Cat Pussy cat where have you been?

I’ve been to London to visit the Queen.

Pussy Cat Pussy Cat what did you do there?

I frightened a little mouse under a chair.

Are we people, like the cat in the nursery rhyme, who settle for pettiness, trivialities and small thrills when we could be enjoying royalty; the King of the Universe? Do we settle for the fleeting pleasures of this life when infinite fullness of the Excellency of Christ is offered to

us? Do we content our souls with the manikins of success and status when the abundant kindness and enduring fidelity of Jesus Christ is extended to us?

What will we prefer tonight? Will we leave this building hesitant of our salvation? Will we concern ourselves not with our casual and relaxed view of the “Christmas story”? Will you say to yourself, “Yea, yea, I know this truth. I’m okay. I’ve already believed it?”

Beloved, what does this mean to have the Word unveiled to us? What should our response be to vv.14-18?

I’ll wrap this message up by pointing to what Jesus desires. Let’s close tonight by turning to John 17:24,26.

Jesus in the recorded “high priestly” prayer discloses what he desires. (read vv.24-26)

- To see His glory (v.24)
- To love His glory (v.26)

To receive Him is to see Him and to savor Him. This is conversion. This is salvation. This is fullness. This is the “good news of great joy” (Lk.2:10).